

Food Stamps Step 1

U. S. Department of Agriculture Eligibility Pre-Screening Tool

What is Food Stamps Step 1?

Food Stamps Step 1 (www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov) is a Food Stamp Program pre-screening tool. It is a simple, easy to follow web site with a question and answer format that tells users if they might be eligible for food stamp benefits and estimates the amount of benefits they might receive. It also links users to the official government benefits website at <http://www.govbenefits.gov> so that they can find out if they might be eligible for other Federal benefit programs as well.

Who can use Food Stamps Step 1?

Anyone with access to a computer with an Internet connection can use the tool to pre-screen themselves or others for food stamp benefits. This includes public and private human service agencies, faith-based organizations, employers of low-wage workers, potential applicants, seniors, and other individuals. The tool is written at a 6th-grade reading level.

Why is Food Stamps Step 1 needed?

The Food Stamp Program is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. It enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with coupons or electronic benefit transfer cards. But only 60 percent of eligible people participate in the Food Stamp Program. The number one reason why eligible people do not participate is that they do not know they are eligible. This tool saves time and effort by helping users learn about their eligibility and potential benefit amount before going to the local food stamp office. This information allows them to make an informed decision about taking the next step to apply.

Does Food Stamps Step 1 account for State variations in Food Stamp Programs?

Because some State agencies and other organizations have developed local pre-screening tools that adjust for State regulations, the Food Stamp Program pre-screening tool always asks the user's State of residence. If that State already has an online tool, the user is sent to that tool. The Food Stamp Program will also provide the pre-screening tool source code to any State Food Stamp agency or Food and Nutrition Service outreach grantee that wants to use it as a base to create a State specific tool.

What is the next step after using Food Stamps Step 1?

Individuals who use the pre-screening tool and find out that they might be eligible for food stamp benefits should contact their local food stamp office for an application as soon as possible. FNS has outlined ten steps to take to fill your grocery bag through the Food Stamp Program. This information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/>. People interested in more information about applying for food stamp benefits can also call 1-800-221-5689.



Food Stamps Make America Stronger.